

**Forest Service Manual
Service Wide - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Manual 6900 – Emergency Medical Services
Chapter 50 – Public Information and Education**

Amendment Number: 6900-2024-6

Effective date: January 17, 2024

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: Antoine Dixon, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

Date approved: January 12, 2024

Responsible Staff: Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OSOH)

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s): 6900_50, Amendment 6900-2020-6, June 15, 2020

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

6950: Revises chapter in its entirety. Removes NPS relevant terms throughout directive.

6950.04: Adds Regional Forester’s responsibilities.

6952: Changes section title from “The National Park Service Emergency Medical Services Field Manual” to “Emergency Medical Services Protocols and Procedures” and sets forth direction.

6952.1: Changes section title from “Administering the National Park Service EMS Field Manual” to “Administering the EMS Field Manual” and sets forth direction.

6952.2: Changes section title from “Making Changes, Corrections, Deletions, from the NPS EMS Field Manual” to “Making Changes, Corrections, Deletions, from the EMS Field Manual” and sets forth direction.

6953: Removes obsolete direction on Local Emergency Medical Services Advisors Manual.

6953.03: Removes obsolete direction on policy from 6953 section.

6953.1: Removes obsolete direction on Function of the EMS Medical Advisor’s Manual.

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6950: Establishes new chapter and sets forth codes, captions, and direction for Public Information and Education.

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The Forest Service shall provide information to the public and the news media, consistent with applicable laws, USDA policy, and Forest Service guidelines.

6950.01 - Authority

These authorities are applicable for this chapter in addition to those listed in section 6901 of this manual.

1. **Title 7 CFR, part 1.** Establishes policy, procedures, requirements, and responsibilities for administration and coordination of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), pursuant to which any person may obtain official records. It also provides rules pertaining to the disclosure of records pursuant to compulsory process.
2. **Title 5, U.S.C, part 522.** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. Federal agencies are required to disclose any information requested under the FOIA unless it falls under one of nine exemptions which protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement.

6950.03 - Policy

The Forest Service shall:

1. Ensure regulatory and policy compliance with respect to information release,
2. Establish appropriate guidelines concerning relations with representatives of the media,
3. Promote education of EMS related subjects, and
4. Ensure that methods of obtaining follow-up patient information are established as part of a Continuing Quality Improvement program.

6950.04 - Responsibility

Public Information Officer. The Regional Forester, Forest Supervisor, Station Director, Director of LEI should designate one or more staff members to be responsible for responding to EMS information requests. These staff members shall familiarize themselves with the regulations codified in 7 CFR 1.5, Responses to Records Request and should establish close cooperation and liaison with representatives of the news media in order to foster sound working relationships and to communicate Forest Service policies effectively, in advance of actual incidents.

6951 - Public Information and Education

The Privacy Act of 1974 as amended, 5 USC 552 FOIA Act and Department of Agriculture regulations, 7 CFR 1.5, Responses to Records Request, are based on a long-standing recognition

of the public's right to obtain information about government operations and activities. This right is balanced by limitations contained in the Freedom of Information Act and further restricted by provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 amended, 5 USC 301, Departmental Regulations, 552 FOIA Act, and 552(a) Records Maintained on Individuals.

While there is no distinction made between the general public and representatives of the news media concerning the criteria to withhold or release information, a distinction is applicable with respect to the gathering of information in the field by the news media and others. Concerns for the safety of field personnel, media representatives and others, must guide public information strategies in field situations.

6951.1 - Document Search

The U.S. Department of Agriculture allows an individual to create, submit, and track the status of your FOIA request(s) ([Freedom of Information Act](#)).

A request for information must be in writing and specific to the point of being sufficient to identify the particular record(s) sought. If a request requires an inordinate amount of time and effort to make a response, the Regional Forester, Forest Supervisor, Station Director, or Director of LEI may elect to charge for the services as provided for in 7 CFR 1.5, Responses to Records Request.

6951.2 - Document Disclosure

Persons requesting information are entitled to view the document and/or receive a copy in which the information is contained. If there is information in the document that is to be withheld, it should be covered over on the original or deleted from the copy. The requestor must be informed that a deletion has been made.

The Electronic Patient Care Record and the Patient Care Record (ePCR/PCR) is subject to patient confidentiality requirements. They may not be open to Freedom of Information requests. Contents of the records can be given out only when the patient authorizes a release, when subpoenaed by courts for evidence, or when State law requires the reporting of certain incidents. EMS run sheets should not be routinely attached to law enforcement forms.

If Forest Service practice requires the EMS provider to submit an Incident Record in addition to the run sheet, details of the patient assessment and treatment should be left out. A brief synopsis of the type of medical call is all that should be included. The following information also must not be made available:

1. The names and titles/positions of deceased or seriously injured persons, until the next-of-kin are notified.

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2. Grisly details that are not necessary to publicize and that do not alter the basic facts of an incident.
3. The home address or home telephone number of Forest Service personnel or others involved in the incident.
4. Information from individual personnel files and/or medical records of employees.
5. Requests for information contained in reports of concern to other bureaus or agencies, must be immediately referred to the Forest Supervisor, Station Director, Director of LEI.
6. Information requests in criminal cases where EMS was involved such as homicides, sex crimes, and so forth, should be treated as per the law enforcement guidelines in FSH 5309.11, chapter 50, section 58.

6951.3 - Media Relations

Relationships with media representatives must be based on the right of the public to obtain access to information, the effective discharge of EMS responsibilities and the safety of all persons involved in EMS incidents.

At the scene of an accident, legitimate representatives of the news media shall be allowed access to areas normally and legally restricted from the general public as long as access does not interfere with EMS operations.

If the safety of media representatives would be jeopardized, they should be informed and restricted from the scene. If the safety of Forest Service personnel would be jeopardized by media presence in a hazardous area or situation, justification exists to restrict media representatives from the scene.

6951.4 - Forest Service EMS Quality Assurance and Patient Follow-up Information

Personal information such as the patient's name, address, and so forth, should be deleted from records when the incident is reviewed for quality improvement and educational training.

6951.5 - Education

Region, Forest, Station, and Law Enforcement Investigations units (R/F/S/LEI) may use a variety of ways to educate employees and the public by using historical data from past incidents. Slide programs using some details and photos from careless situations or other activities might be considered. Information or photos about incidents should be used in a manner that appropriately considers privacy rights. Climbing, boating, hiking or other such recreation programs should emphasize EMS skills as a component of risk management whenever necessary.

6952 - Emergency Medical Services Protocols and Procedures

The EMS Protocols and Procedures previously known as the National Park Service as Field Manual (NPS FM-51) is the series of procedures, protocols and medications (EMS Standard of Care) that are approved for use by all employees of Forest Service performing EMS at the Level III and above (EMR, EMT, AEMT, Parkmedic, and Paramedic levels), is now FSM 6900 Emergency Medical Services.

6952.03 - Policy

All R/F/S/LEI units with Level III (EMR and above) EMS services, working with local EMS Medical Advisors and R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinators will become familiar with the Forest Service EMS Protocols and Procedures, and this directive will be an integral part of the continuing education process and any agency-led EMS refreshers.

R/F/S/LEI units with Level III and above (EMR and above) EMS systems will retain the services of a local EMS Medical Advisor.

6952.04 - Responsibility

Forest Service units that provide patient care at Levels III and above (EMR, EMT, AEMT, Parkmedic, and Paramedic) are required to have a local EMS Medical Advisor to oversee the R/F/S/LEI EMS program. Local EMS Medical Advisors will require that EMS providers perform at a standard of care that is consistent with local, regional and national ones. The EMS Protocols and Procedures are an effort to standardize drugs, procedures and protocols over all Forest Service units with emergency medical programs.

R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinators and local EMS Medical Advisors will ensure that EMS providers are held accountable for the knowledge, skills and practices outlined in the EMS Protocols and Procedures. This will be accomplished through written and practical periodic examinations, or other methods designed by the R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinators and local EMS Medical Advisors.

6952.1 - Administering the EMS Protocols and Procedures

The EMS Protocols and Procedures will be reviewed by the Washington Office, National EMS Program Manager and Washington Office, National EMS Medical Director to ensure it remains current and germane to the Forest Service EMS program. Input from the Advisory Committee (FSM 6900, sec. 6904.03, Forest Service National EMS Advisory Committee) as well as regional EMS coordinators is a continuous process.

6952.2 - Making Changes, Corrections, Deletions and Deviations from the EMS Protocols and Procedures

There may be instances in which a R/F/S/LEI unit wants to deviate from the EMS Protocols and Procedures. R/F/S/LEI need to have the ability to develop standards of patient care that are consistent with local and regional standards of care and meet their localized need. R/F/S/LEI need to have the option to develop procedures, protocols and drugs that are designed to meet the needs of their individual units since there are a wide range of needs, environments, and types of EMS incidents in the Forest Service.

R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinators, working with the advice and direction of the local EMS Medical Advisor, may put forth a written proposal to add, change, or delete a protocol, procedure, or drug from the EMS Protocols and Procedures for their local use or for use service-wide.

The R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinator will submit the proposal through the Washington Office, National EMS Program Manager will consult with the local EMS Medical Advisor and the Washington Office, National EMS Medical Director. Based on their recommendation, the Director of Emergency Services may approve or disapprove the proposal with a written justification. The process will occur within 30 calendar days.

6952.3 - The Appeal Process

Proposals not approved may be appealed in writing within 60 calendar days. A seven-member Appeals Board will be established by the United States Forest Service Office of EMS in conjunction with the Forest Service National EMS Advisory Group. The Appeals Board will consist of four local EMS Medical Advisors and three R/F/S/LEI EMS Coordinators selected from unaffected units. The Board will select a Chairperson. The Board will review the proposal and either sustain, overturn or send the proposal back to the Forest Service, Office of EMS. The Appeals Board decision is final. No appeal is available beyond the Appeals Board. The decision of the board will be recorded in a memorandum to the Forest Service Washington Office, National EMS Program Manager.